

PRIVATE LAND PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL – WORKING DOCUMENT
LAST UPDATED: MARCH 2014

I. COUNCIL CHARGE:

- A. WHEREAS, relations among landowners, hunters, outfitters, and FWP have become increasingly strained over the past several years;
- B. WHEREAS, some landowners feel their contributions to providing wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities are not adequately appreciated or rewarded, while other landowners are unable to control game animal populations due to actions of neighboring landowners who either allow no hunting or very restricted hunting that prevents adequate harvest of game animals;
- C. WHEREAS, hunters are increasingly concerned about diminishing access to private and public lands for hunting opportunities and harvest of game animals;
- D. WHEREAS, while licensed hunting outfitters provide valuable services to hunters and landowners, their activities can affect availability of public hunting opportunities and management of Montana's public wildlife resources;
- E. WHEREAS, other types of commercial hunting activities can affect availability of public hunting opportunities and management of Montana's public wildlife resources;
- F. WHEREAS, the long-term viability of Montana's free-ranging public wildlife resources and hunting heritage is threatened;
- G. NOW, THEREFORE, Governor Steve Bullock charges the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council, appointed in compliance with MCA 87-1-269, to develop recommendations to help achieve common goals, to include, but not limited to the following:
 - 1. Maximize access to private and public land to provide for public hunting opportunities and effective management of public wildlife resources;
 - 2. Maximize landowner satisfaction with available options for effective management of area game populations while minimizing impacts of allowing public hunting;
 - 3. Maximize hunter satisfaction with available options for public hunting access opportunities that can help achieve effective management of area game populations;

4. Maximize outfitter satisfaction with available options for providing public hunting opportunities that can help achieve effective management of area game populations;
5. Maximize effective use of FWP programs, tools, and activities that can potentially affect hunting access;
6. Minimize the number of people that do not hunt in Montana because of access-related limitations;
7. Minimize the number of problematic wildlife concentration management situations that result from access-related circumstances

II. SHORT TERM ISSUES

(GENERATED AND PRIORITIZED AT JANUARY MEETING)

- A. Relationships: Increase efforts to expand landowner stewardship program; contact ranchers to discuss what their expectation are in regards to FWP access; develop a marketing program to highlight the good things going on in the BMP; improve relationships between landowners, outfitters, and sportsmen; work on hunter education (sportsmen ethics) to build mutual understanding between sportsmen, landowners, and outfitters; work on ways to provide a quality hunting experience
- B. Ensure adequate funding for block management
- C. Access: Gain a better understanding of and communicate what the access issue really is; work on loss of access as a political pushback; work on how to use other licenses and permits to gain access; incentivize use of FWP's access programs; clearly explain the difference between access and impacts
- D. Open isolated parcels of public and private lands
- E. Investigate corner crossing legislation as one way to increase access opportunities, with the caveat that the Council will have to understand and respond to associated landowner issues
- F. Review the Block Management Program and the BMP audit to see if there are any changes the Council can make (and deal with audit recommendations)
- G. Review licensing programs (e.g., HB 607 and others) for possible simplifications

III. LONG TERM ISSUES

(GENERATED AND PRIORITIZED AT JANUARY MEETING)

- A. Large landowner relations - Figure out how the hunter can continue to have access with the increase of new large landowners; how to provide ranch sale

alternatives and protect traditional uses; how to understand non-traditional large landowners and build relationships moving forward

- B. Develop a method to address problematic game populations, and develop a toolbox of solutions
- C. Increase funding for FWP access programs from resident sportsmen
- D. Work on opening more access to public lands
- E. Considering working with OPI/Montana public school systems and higher education to integrate a Montana Stewardship for All Program (focus on ethics and tradition)
- F. Develop new access programs (including easements), funding and authority
- G. Work on ways to increase funding for access programs to ensure access for future generations

IV. **ORIGINAL BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ISSUES—REFINED AT FEBRUARY MEETING:**

- A. Resident and non-resident license fees should be evaluated as a first step in ensuring that BMP funding sources are adequate to 1) ensure a balance is reached between quality and quantity of access and 2) ensure the program will continue to grow.
- B. Review the Block Management Program and the BMP audit to see if there are any changes the Council can make – The Council is aware that FWP is actively addressing issues, but they believe that room should also be left for innovation.

V. **PROBLEMS AND GOALS FOR ACCESS AND RELATIONSHIP-RELATED SHORT TERM ISSUES** *(GENERATED AND DISCUSSED AT FEBRUARY MEETING)*

- A. Hunter Access:
 - 1. **Problem:** Private landowners not being comfortable allowing access to public lands, roads and trails.

Goal: Respecting and understanding private property rights, the end goal is to maximize access to public and private lands.
 - 2. **Problem:** How to build the rural-urban bridge?

Goal: Understanding and respecting each other's values

3. **Problem:** How do we engage and build relationships with non-traditional landowners?
 - a) Discussion topics:
 - (1) Fear that these landowners do not understand and/or respect Montana's hunting heritage and traditions.
 - (2) Public trust versus private property issues are the underlying problem, and this problem has a lack of statutory and administrative remedies.

Goal: Increase public access to private property, specifically property owned by non-traditional landowners.

Goal: Address the needs of non-traditional *and* traditional landowners.

B. Improving hunter, landowner, outfitter, and FWP relationships:

1. **Problem:** Landowner expectations of hunter behavior, game management, and FWP

Goal: Improve communication between hunters, FWP, and landowners
2. **Problem:** How do we preserve FWP credibility with both landowners and hunters? Specifically, how do we prevent side issues from affecting the credibility of regional FWP personnel (Example: bison management decisions affecting game wardens' relationships with landowners, although the game wardens had no control over the decisions)?

Goal: Improve FWP credibility with both landowners and hunters
3. **Problem:** How do we manage hunter behavior, ethics, and violations?

Goal: Improve compliance, recognize good behavior
4. **Goal:** Establish relationships with out-of-state large landowners.

Goal: Make the BMP easier for all parties (hunters, landowners, and FWP) to use.